



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information: 202-418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

DA 13-2432
Released: December 19, 2013

COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ENTITY SELECTED FOR CERTIFICATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM FOR MISSISSIPPI

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission’s (Commission) Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has selected the Perkins School for the Blind for certification to participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) for the state of Mississippi.

The NDBEDP is a program mandated by Section 105 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) that provides funding of up to \$10 million annually for the distribution of communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.¹ On April 4, 2011, the Commission adopted the *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, establishing the framework for a pilot program to fulfill this CVAA mandate.² In that *Order*, the Commission determined that it would certify one entity per state as eligible to receive support for the local distribution of equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.³ Each certified entity has primary oversight and responsibility for compliance with program requirements for its state, but certified entities may fulfill their responsibilities either directly or through collaboration, partnership, or contract with other individuals or entities in-state or out-of-state, including other NDBEDP certified programs.⁴ Participation in the NDBEDP also entails the provision of related services, including local outreach, individual assessments and training, as well as equipment installation and maintenance, that may be needed to effectively provide a person who is deaf-blind with the equipment that he or she needs to access the communications services covered by the CVAA.⁵

¹ Pub. L. 111-260, 124 Stat. 2751 (2010); *see also* Pub. L. 111-265, 124 Stat. 2795 (2010) (technical corrections to the CVAA). Section 105 of the CVAA adds Section 719 to the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and is codified at 47 U.S.C. § 620. The CVAA allows the Commission to allocate these funds from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service Fund (TRS Fund).

² *See Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, Section 105, Relay Services for Deaf-Blind Individuals*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Report and Order, 26 FCC Rcd 5640 (2011) (*NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*). The NDBEDP pilot program will run for two years, with an option for the Commission to extend the program for another year. *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5649, ¶ 22.

³ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5646, ¶ 12.

⁴ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5647, ¶ 13.

⁵ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5667-5676, ¶¶ 63-79. The NDBEDP pilot program will cover the reasonable costs of such related services. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(f)(2).

The Commission launched the NDBEDP on July 1, 2012.⁶ On July 2, 2012, the Commission announced that it had selected one entity for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to participate in the NDBEDP.⁷ CGB selected The Arc of Mississippi (The Arc) as the certified program to participate in the NDBEDP for Mississippi.⁸

The Arc notified the Commission that it will relinquish its certification to participate in the NDBEDP for Mississippi, effective January 1, 2014.⁹ On October 30, 2013, CGB invited applications for certification to participate in the NDBEDP for the state of Mississippi.¹⁰ In response, the Commission received one application from the Perkins School for the Blind (Perkins). In accordance with the *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, CGB reviewed Perkins's application for its ability to meet the following qualifications, either directly or in coordination with other programs or entities:

- expertise in the field of deaf-blindness, including familiarity with the culture and etiquette of people who are deaf-blind, to ensure that equipment distribution and the provision of related services occurs in a manner that is relevant and useful to consumers who are deaf-blind;
- ability to communicate effectively with people who are deaf-blind (for training and other purposes), by among other things, using sign language, providing materials in Braille, ensuring that information made available online is accessible, and using other assistive technologies and methods to achieve effective communication;
- staffing and facilities sufficient to administer the program, including the ability to distribute equipment and provide related services to eligible individuals throughout the state, including those in remote areas;
- experience with the distribution of specialized customer premises equipment, especially to people who are deaf-blind;
- experience in training users on how to use the equipment and how to set up the equipment for its effective use; and
- familiarity with the telecommunications, Internet access, and advanced communications services that will be used with the distributed equipment.¹¹

CGB has determined that Perkins meets the Commission's qualifications for certification to operate the NDBEDP program in Mississippi. As the NDBEDP certified program for Mississippi,

⁶ *Commission Announces Launch of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7403 (CGB July 2, 2012).

⁷ *Commission Announces Entities Certified to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7397 (CGB July 2, 2012).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Letter from Matt Nalker, Executive Director, The Arc of Mississippi, to Jacqueline Ellington, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, FCC (September 25, 2013).

¹⁰ *FCC Invites Applications for Certification to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program in the State of Mississippi*, Public Notice, 28 FCC Rcd 14869 (CGB October 30, 2013).

¹¹ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(b)(3).

Perkins will be partnering with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults (HKNC). Perkins and HKNC, collectively, have more than 200 years of experience working with children and adults who are deaf-blind, both employ individuals who are deaf-blind, and both are experienced in providing accessible services in a manner that shows cultural awareness of the deaf-blind community. In addition, Perkins, in partnership with HKNC, has been operating NDBEDP programs in 12 other states since July 1, 2012,¹² and in Nevada since July 1, 2013.¹³

Accordingly, CGB has selected the Perkins School for the Blind for certification to participate in the NDBEDP for the state of Mississippi. Certification is granted to the Perkins School for the Blind effective January 1, 2014, and continues for the duration of the NDBEDP pilot program, subject to compliance with program requirements.¹⁴

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS: To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (TTY).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jackie Ellington, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 202-418-1153, e-mail Jackie.Ellington@fcc.gov; or Rosaline Crawford, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 202-418-2075, e-mail Rosaline.Crawford@fcc.gov.

-FCC-

¹² *Commission Announces Entities Certified to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7397 (CGB July 2, 2012).

¹³ *Commission Announces Entity Selected for Certification to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program for Nevada*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 28 FCC Rcd 10223 (July 16, 2013).

¹⁴ *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5647, ¶ 14. *See generally*, 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.610(a)-(k).